United Nations S/PV.7616

Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7616th meeting
Friday, 29 January 2016, 10.30 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Japan	Mr. Yoshikawa
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

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16-02273 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Implementation of the note by the President of the Security Council (S/2010/507)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on a successful presidency of the Security Council. It is my honour to be the first speaker to share observations about this month as a newly elected member. Japan welcomes today's formal wrap-up session. We also welcome your initiative, Sir, to hold an informal session this afternoon, which will allow us to have an interactive dialogue with the broader membership of the United Nations. As this session is in open format, let me suggest to you, Elbio, to start this afternoon's informal session with questions and answers.

Let me first touch upon the working methods of the Council. I would like to remind all Council members that in presidential note S/2010/507, of which I have a copy with me, all participants in Security Council meetings are encouraged, in paragraph 29, to deliver their statements in five minutes or less. Making a short statement is not easy. Winston Churchill once said, "If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter". Let me try to follow the five-minute rule.

The Security Council has dealt with many difficult issues during the month of January. Among them, I would like to concentrate on the nuclear test conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January. The test was a clear violation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the international non-proliferation regime. It also constitutes a grave security threat that undermines peace and security in the region and beyond. On the day of the nuclear test, the Security Council immediately held emergency consultations upon a request by Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea. The Security Council was united in issuing a press statement right after the meeting, which strongly condemned the test and decided to begin working immediately on further significant measures in a new draft resolution of the Security Council.

As one of the proponents of the emergency meeting, let me express our appreciation for the cooperation of all Council members. After the very swift reaction by the Council, informal discussions have been conducted towards a new draft resolution. We would like to commend the efforts led by the United States, which holds the pen. Japan believes that adopting a new draft resolution with further significant measures needs to be the top, urgent priority of the Council.

Sanctions under the Charter of the United Nations are not a punishment or the final objective. Rather, sanctions are one of the important tools that the Council has at its disposal to bring about a comprehensive solution to the issue in question. We agree that in order to bring about a solution to the issue there has to be dialogue. But we should also be reminded that we have been engaged in dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for more than 20 years on their nuclear development programme. Also, past agreements and dialogues have not succeeded in bringing about a solution. Those agreements include the 1994 Agreed Framework, the Pyongyang declaration between Japan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2002 and the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks in 2005 — just to mention a few. But none of those attempts worked, as promises by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were not kept. In order for dialogue to work, there has to be pressure at the same time. That is the very reason that we are arguing for a new, robust draft resolution.

In stark contrast to the grave challenge posed to the non-proliferation regime by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the international community witnessed a positive development with regard to the Iranian nuclear issue, namely, the advent, on 16 January, of the implementation day of resolution 2231 (2015). As a result, United Nations sanctions related to Iran's nuclear programme were lifted. That is clear proof that sanctions do work.

Before concluding my statement, Mr. President, I would like to commend you and the entire Uruguayan team for your incredible work. It must have been a big challenge for Uruguay to assume the presidency in its very first month on the Council. Having been on the Council with you for one month, Sir, I have learned a

tremendous amount from your effective and professional conduct of the presidency. I wish Ambassador Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño and Venezuela every success in the month of February.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): I, too, want to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on the very efficient and effective manner in which you and your team have managed our work during the past month, which has been a very busy one. I also want to commend the new members. I was very impressed at the way that all of them immediately became very active, engaged and efficient in our work.

It is very good to have this wrap-up session, two sessions, in fact, as the Ambassador of Japan has mentioned, as we are having a formal session here today — and there have been requests from the wider membership for more of these formal wrap-ups — and, I am pleased to note, we are also going to continue the recent tradition of an informal wrap-up, this afternoon.

Here in the Chamber we tend to speak from prepared texts because we are stating the positions of our Governments on the important issues of the day. But I am not using a prepared text, other than a few scrappy notes, because I want to focus on another aspect of our work here today. I think that the Council does very well in stating its positions nationally, but it does not do so well in what I see as its core business, which is problem-solving. We need to spend more time talking to each other about how we solve the problems on our agenda, and less time stating our positions for the record. I think that is an issue that New Zealand will continue to promote for the remainder of our time here on the Council. Taking that perspective, I want to address two issues that came up on our agenda this month.

The first is the issue of Burundi. I would like to thank France and Egypt for their very accurate reports and summations (see S/PV.7615) of the conversations we had in Bujumbura and with the African Union Peace and Security Council in Ethiopia. It was a great relief to New Zealand that we finally managed to get the trip to Burundi under way. It was something we had asked for over six months ago. It was a disappointing trip in lots of ways. We found it very difficult to engage with the Government of Burundi on the issues because, as we heard from the representative of France, the perspectives of the Government, on the one side, and the opposition, on the other, were so very different. It is hard to have a conversation when you have such different views of life. On the other hand, it was very important that we went there. I think that was a very important demonstration of the Council's concern.

I was very pleased with the conversations in Addis Ababa, where I think we had a really good engagement with the African Peace and Security Council — a very frank discussion with them about the challenges we face. I came away from that meeting convinced that the only way we will make progress on this issue is if the Security Council and the African Peace and Security Council and the East African Community all work together. We cannot afford to be divided. I really welcome that engagement, which I think is something we should be making more of.

The second issue I want to talk about today is Syria, which has dominated a lot of our time on the Council. First I want to pay tribute to Spain, our collaborator on the Syrian humanitarian file, as well as to welcome Egypt, which is joining us now on this very difficult set of issues. In this case we had another example where the world responded when something really graphically grim was put in front of us, that is, the starvation in Madaya — a little like the drowned boy on the Turkish beach. We all rushed to respond in a very dramatic way. But we should have been doing that much earlier. Again, this is a classic failure of the international community and of the Council in responding to information we knew was there but we had not grabbed the issue or acted quickly enough.

I was reminded of being here in the Chamber 20 years ago when we knew what was happening in Rwanda. But it was only when the cameras got to Goma and saw the refugee situation there that we actually got an international response. Again, it was months too late. We need to be much better at grabbing these issues, working with them and not just waiting for the television cameras to spur us into action.

Those are the thoughts that I wanted to contribute today. I wish to thank the members of the Council for being such excellent colleagues.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I could not agree more with the opening comment by the Ambassador of Japan, specifically the quotation from Churchill and the five minutes. It is a topic I am obsessed with, I must admit. We talk too much, with not many initiatives carried to success. We do not implement things properly.

For that reason, if I may, allow me to mention that in the last open debate in which we spoke on working methods (see S/PV.7516), Spain carried out a new but important exercise, namely, gathering the opinions of the broader membership. Those views were reflected in a document that I circulated among all members. I think those are good working methods — when we speak little in the Chamber and yet take full advantage of what was actually said in the Chamber.

Since this is the first wrap-up session since August 2015, and so I therefore feel I can speak about what has happened between August and today. I quite agree with Mr. Gerard van Bohemen that it is better to improvise with certain ideas and to share reflections, rather than to give a lengthy account of everything that has happened. I would like to differentiate between where I think the Council has had success and conducted itself well and where I think it needs to improve. I think that, since August, the Council has conducted itself very well in many cases, especially in two.

The first was in the adoption of resolution 2242 (2015), on women and peace and security. I do not simply say that because it was adopted during the Spanish presidency of the Council, but because, working very well with the United Kingdom, and starting with very wide-ranging positions among those at the table, we were able reach overall consensus on a very ambitious and important text that, among toher things, sets up an informal working group that will enable the implementation of resolution 2242 (2015) to become an actual reality.

The second area where I think the Council was successful was the nuclear agreement with Iran. I say that because I had the weighty responsibility to be the facilitator of the new mechanism established in resolution 2231 (2015), which presupposes major efforts from the Spanish Mission as facilitator, as well as for the Secretariat and other institutions. Let me say that it is my intention to hold an open briefing to all Members of the United Nations no later than within the next two weeks, so that the membership can properly understand how the new mechanism is going to operate when it comes to commercial relations with Iran. I will make a very general announcement.

On the negative side of things, in the first place, we obviously have the question of Syria. When it comes to Syrian policy, we have not been able to put an end to the war there. We have our fingers crossed that the meetings in Geneva today will conclude successfully. They have not begun as we would have hoped, but they have begun anyway. On the humanitarian front in Syria, although it is a real pleasure to work with Gerard and with our friend Amr from Egypt, unfortunately, we cannot give ourselves good marks, as the humanitarian statistics are becoming increasingly worse. For that reason, the three of us have come up with mechanisms to ensure that there are no more Madayas, as well as to improve the response levels of the Syrian Government to requests from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Those are two important priorities.

On the chemical weapons front, that is working well because very soon we will be getting the first results from the Joint Investigative Mechanism. That leads me to mention at this important forum that we are in the middle of an important process of reviewing resolution 1540 (2004), which will conclude in December. My goal in that review process, with the help of Council members, is to ensure that resolution 1540 (2004) is sufficiently effective to truly halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors.

In my notes, on the negative side, there is also Burundi. In that context, let me say that, although the results of the Council's trip were not what we expected, I will say the Council has performed well, insofar as we managed to carry out a trip at an important time to prevent a situation we all fear. I think we should be satisfied with our conduct in that regard. Results, however, are a different matter.

There are various other initiatives that have gone very well. I will just touch on resolution 2261 (2016), on Colombia, which shows that States have trust in the Security Council. That is an important matter. I would mention as well as the important resolution 2249 (2015), on combating terrorism, as well as resolution 2253 (2015), on the financing of terrorism.

To conclude, so as not to exceed my five minutes, Mr. President, I congratulate you for the excellent work you have done in the Council in your first month. I also commend you for following the tradition we began a few months ago with Toledo-style wrap-up sessions, such as the one that will take place at 3 o'clock today. Such sessions make it possible to have a more informal exchange on the opinions about our work with the wider membership of the United Nations.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by warmly thanking you and your

entire team, Mr. President, for the sustained efforts throughout Uruguay's presidency of the Security Council during the month of January. I also wish to say just how much we appreciate your foresight in recognizing the Council's priorities, your high degree of professionalism in easing the Council's work and your team's keenness to communicate with everyone. I also welcome the initiative to convene this wrap-up session on the Council's work in the month of January, a month during which the Council dealt with a particularly hectic schedule and extremely important issues that have a direct impact on peace and security.

During the past few weeks, the international challenges proved to be particularly complex, which demanded fortitude and cooperation going forward. Given those challenges — Israel's persistent occupation of Palestinian territory, the exacerbation of the risk and dangers of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, political and humanitarian crises that are spreading from Syria to Central Africa to Yemen, the many challenges facing West Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, the issues of Cyprus and of Haiti, the support for the historic peace accords in Colombia, and now, our responsibility to protect civilians during conflict — all these issues fall to the responsibility vested in the Security Council to tackle challenges to international peace and security.

Egypt, during previous meetings of the Council, has spoken on critical issues. For that reason, I will focus solely on the mission of the Council to Burundi as a model for analysing the work of the Council in effectively tackling crises on our agenda and to say that the strength of the Council lies in its shared vision and joint action in tackling such crises. As far as we are concerned, the mission can be counted as among the major achievements of the Council this month, given that it represented genuine engagement with a crisis that requires our close and timely attention because it is of concern to the international community and because of the reality of the situation and the means available to resolve it. That was a visit that enabled the Security Council to directly come to grips with the reality on the ground. We were able to sit down and speak with a wide array of national stakeholders. We held discussions with those in charge of various spheres of life in Burundi and came away from that with several positive indicators that we then took to the Burundian leaders, to say that they needed to strengthen their actions.

The message, therefore, on the part of the Security Council to the President of Burundi could be considered as one of the direct outcomes of that visit. The informal dialogue with the Peace and Security Council of the African Union also helped us to come up with a comprehensive approach, and we also had other means of better understanding the political and security situation. I have full confidence that the members of the Council came back with a deeper understanding with what has taken place on the ground and a clearer vision as to the options available to us.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this monthly wrap-up session, which affords us to look back on the issues and the work undertaken by the Security Council in the period under consideration, making it possible to chart a course for future meetings. In that regard, allow me to commend the leadership and wisdom that you have shown throughout your outstanding presidency of the Security Council.

The glimmers of hope that have come from the regularly held and peaceful elections in West Africa, the establishment of a national unity Government in Libya, significant progress in the Côte d'Ivoire towards a successful transition and the positive course of talks in Colombia and Cyprus have partly offset the particularly disastrous humanitarian effects and myriad consequences of the violence in Syria, the lethargy of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and the continuation of terrorist attacks throughout nearly the entire world. We are fortunate, Sir, that you called for two important open debates on the ministerial level (see S/PV.7606 and S/PV.7610) — on the protection of civilians and on the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine — which afforded us a deeper understanding to more efficiently direct our action.

The report of the Regional Office for West and Central Africa illustrates how, through preventive, proactive and better coordinated diplomacy and with the support of the United Nations, regional and subregional organizations can make conflict prevention a reality. From Nigeria to Togo to Burkina Faso to the Republic of Guinea and to Côte d'Ivoire, successful elections have attested to the continued and tenacious engagement on the part of the Economic Community of West African States — which my country has the honour of chairing — and the ideals of peace, democracy, liberty and the rule of law. That positive impetus deserves to

be supported and strengthened with a view to future elections in many countries in the subregion.

Another example of the positive results coming out of your presidency, Sir, was the unanimous co-sponsoring and adoption of resolution 2261 (2016), through which the Council, following the request on the part of the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, decided to create a special political mission to monitor the peace process under way and the surrendering of weapons, after the conclusion of a final agreement to a conflict that has lasted nearly 50 years. That mission reflects the commitment of the parties to negotiated solutions and attests to the immense hope invested in the United Nations, which the Senegalese delegation strives to maintain. The same can be said of the formation of a national accord Government in Libya and of the positive events that we have seen driven by the Cypriot, Greek and Turkish communities with the view to resuming peace negotiations, with the support of the United Nations.

Those significant advances on the path to peace, however, must not hide the sad reality that millions of civilians are living in disarray Africa and in the Middle East. In that respect, allow me to dwell on several of those situations.

The litany of terrorist attacks that occurred this month shows the acuity if not the scale of a phenomenon against which we continue to fight untiringly, but it also represents the greatest threat to our security and the ideals that constitute a model world. That leads me to reiterate the overriding need to effectively implement the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel with a view to a pre-emptive holistic approach, which is the only approach capable of reaching lasting solutions. As we have heard at length, that applies to the situation in the Middle East, on which I will not dwell.

With regard to the Horn of Africa and the difficult situation in Somalia, on which we held rather intense consultations yesterday, I would like to relaunch the appeal that I made then for the international community, individual States and international organizations to continue their financial support at this critical moment in Somalia's history. We are now seeing positive signs, particularly with regard to the electoral process and the progressive return of Somali expatriates — who are investing and believing in the future of their country — all of which are elements that merit the support of the international community.

Lastly, to in conclusion, I would like to express to you, Sir, how pleased the delegation of Senegal is to participate at your side and, especially during the open debate on the protection of civilians, which remains the very essence of the commitment of Senegalese troops in theatres of operation as they try to bring about security throughout the world. I assure you of the full cooperation of the Senegalese delegation on that issue. We also eagerly await the Venezuelan presidency,

Mr. Ibrahim (Malaysia): Echoing Churchill's remarks, I too would like to say that if I had had the time, I would have prepared a shorter statement. I join other Security Council members in congratulating you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Uruguay for having successully lead the Council during the productive month of January, despite having only just recently assumed membership of the Council. The excellent manner in which you expertly steered the Council's work this past month is indeed commendable.

It is noteworthy that the last the time the Council met in this formal wrap-up format (see S/PV.7516 we had just adopted presidential statement S/PRST/2015/15, which concerns the situation in Syria and outlines proposals for the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex). Since then, the Council has made further strides in addressing the Syrian conflict, most notably with the adoption of several key outcomes last December. In January, we assessed the implementation of those decisions, particularly in resolution 2258 (2015). In our assessment, while limited access for humanitarian relief and supplies had been secured for Madaya, Kafraya and Zabadani, parties to the conflict, especially the Government, must do more to address the dire humanitarian situaion of Syrian civilians in other besieged and hard-to-reach areas. We strongly reiterate the call upon all parties to allow and facilitate the movement and provision of humanitarian relief, particularly across lines of combat. It is only humane and right to do so. The concept of medical neutrality, highlighted by Spain during the open debate on the protection of civilians held on 19 January (see S/PV.7606), seems particularly relevant in this regard. We look forward with interest to reading about the further development of the concept.

Looking a bit further back, to the end of 2015, strong and action-oriented outcomes were adopted, including on Burundi, Libya and South Sudan, as well as on thematic issues such as counter-terrorism and women and peace and security, inter alia.

We have just now heard a briefing by the co-leaders on the Council's visit to Burundi last week. I wish to emphasize the point that Burundi must realize that the Council's desire is to seek a better and more secure and predictable future, and to address the current insecurity issues through political inclusiveness and dialogue. We therefore share the co-leaders' assessment, particularly on the need for the Government to do more to restore public confidence and in maintaining security and law and order for all segments of society in the country.

As demonstrated by the many significant decisions taken during the past month or so, when Council members demonstrated significant flexibility and goodwill, we were able to come together to effectively discharge the mandate of maintaining international peace and security. We should continue to build on this positive momentum.

Such solidarity was again demonstrated in the Council's swift and unified response to the nuclear-test detonations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea earlier this month. Malaysia reiterates its condemnation of the test detonation, which we consider to be an unwarranted provocation that could threaten peace and security in the Korean peninsula and in the wider region. The test violates international norms against nuclear testing, to which all responsible members of the international community are committed.

We also welcome once again the possibility of advancing or achieving closure with respect to the long-running conflict in Colombia. We congratulate the parties, the grantors, the accompanying countries and other partner stakeholders for their tireless efforts towards peace in Colombia. We look forward to working on operationalizing the special political mission established by resolution 2261 (2016), which will form part of the tripartite mechanism to monitor and verify the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities between the parties.

The Council also saw noteworthy and positive developments on the Iran nuclear issue. In January, implementation day of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and its international partners, prescribed under resolution 2231 (2015), has arrived, and we welcome the lifting of United Nations and other sanctions against Iran. We urge Iran to continue to work closely with the International Atomic Energy Agency and other relevant partners to remove all lingering doubts as to the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme.

In the light of such positive developments, we would also encourage Iran to continue deepening dialogue and cooperation with its regional partners aimed at addressing the scourge of terrorism and the various conflicts in the Middle East region.

Notwithstanding the very useful interactive informal briefings held at the end of the past few months, Malaysia continues to believe in the utility and value of these formal wrap-up sessions. As such, we are pleased that Uruguay has decided to hold this formal wrap-up session and the informal briefing later this afternoon, reflecting the views expressed by elected Council members which had served earlier, as well as the sentiments of the wider United Nations membership. Malaysia is of the view that formal note 507 briefings such as this one should become a fixed item on the Council's programme of work, particularly for the month of December. Among other reasons, formal wrap-ups in December would provide outgoing elected Council members with the opportunity to place on record views and reflections on the Council's membership. At the same time, it would also afford an opportunity for the Council as a whole to reflect on and assess its performance over the past year. This would be an important exercise in transparency and inclusivity on the part of the Council.

While recognizing that the scheduling of Council meetings, including the formal wrap-ups, is the prerogative of the presidency during any given month, we will be consulting closely with all Council members in taking this proposal forward.

On that note, I conclude by wishing ambassador Rafael Ramírez Carreño and the entire Venezuelan delegation all the best in taking up the Council's presidency for February, which we believe will be equally fulfilling and productive.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): On this last working day of the first month of the year, it is a good time to take stock and look ahead to the issues that we will need to focus on in February and beyond. I would like to take this opportunity to talk about three top priorities, Syria, Burundi and North Korea, and also to say a few words at the end about an aspect of our working methods.

First, on Syria, the world has truly been shocked at the appalling conditions and starvation in Madaya — images of suffering with which we are now only too familiar. While the Council repeatedly discussed the situation in Madaya over the past few weeks and raised the alarm about the need for more assistance, especially medical care, we still face obstruction by the regime and ruthlessness on the part of the forces on the ground, which prevent the people of Madaya from getting what they need. And as we know now, Madaya offers us only a glimpse of the terrible suffering that is taking place in communities across Syria. Earlier this week, during its briefing to the Council (see S/PV/7612), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs noted that it had increased the number of besieged areas in Syria from 15 to 18, and the number of people in those besieged communities from 393,700 to 486,700. That is an increase of more than 90,000 people trapped without access to humanitarian assistance. With all the major indicators going in the wrong direction, we simply must find a more effective way to change the humanitarian situation on the ground. Especially in the face of this horrendous situation, it is all the more important that the peace process move forward, and we strongly support Special Envoy De Mistura in his continuing efforts to convene the parties in Geneva.

On Burundi, after much negotiation and difficult planning, we managed to start the year with a trip, on which we found an extremely tense and dangerous situation. We heard from civil-society members who had witnessed murder and from women who spoke about sexual violence and rape. Local journalists pleaded for the freedom to report, and the United Nations briefed us on reports of mass graves and ethnic violence. We urge the Government of Burundi to conduct a serious dialogue with all stakeholders, including the armed opposition. In terms of next steps, we are closely following the African Union (AU) Heads of State Summit set to take place this weekend. We heard from the AU Peace and Security Council that it is determined to ensure that the force of 5,000 that it has already authorized is accepted in Burundi and then actually deployed. Action is needed.

On North Korea, as we said in our press statement, the Council strongly condemned the nuclear tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 6 January, which is a clear threat to international peace and security. In that statement, we recalled the need to take further significant measures, and we now must impose real consequences. Our agenda is packed with many other priorities.

We had a positive moment just last Monday, when we adopted resolution 2261 (2016), on Colombia, the Security Council's response to the joint call made by the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia for United Nations engagement to help end the conflict. And, of course, we will need to stay focused on Yemen, South Sudan and many other locations.

But looking at the working methods of the Council, we are in fact encouraged by one important aspect: flexibility. In addition to the meetings listed on the monthly programme of work, in 2015 the Council held 56 briefings under "Any other business", more than one a week and more than double the total in 2014. We also had 17 Arria Formula meetings, more than in 2013 in 2014 combined. Now, of course, that number of meetings does not equal the number of crises solved, or even averted. We know that. We wish more meetings would translate into more solutions to crises. But I think that these figures do nonetheless show that the Council is seeking to resolve the pressing crises that we face today in a more timely way, often trying in a more innovative manner to address these issues.

I would like to thank the delegation of Uruguay for its leadership of the Council this month and to offer our support to the incoming presidency of Venezuela. I would like also to congratulate the Director of the Security Council Affairs Division, Movses Abelian, for his recently announced promotion and to thank him for his steady stewardship of the Council over the past five years.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I must begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, for your excellent work in presiding over the Security Council as well as that of your entire team. We are grateful, Sir, for the way in which you led the Council this month, which began so explosively and has been so full of major issues that will continue to be priorities for us in the month of February. It is also a great pleasure to receive the presidency from a Latin American brother after 25 years of absence from the Security Council. Further, in the spirit of the statements of the representatives of Japan, New Zealand, Malaysia and Spain, who took advantage of the opportunity today to reflect on issues that we think are of vital importance in the Council,

going beyond the narrower viewpoints of our national positions, we would like to add the following.

First of all, we support the holding of these wrap-up sessions because we think that, above all, we as non-permanent members need to be transparent and accountable for what we do and say here in the Council, since we are here because we were elected by the General Assembly. We therefore support the accountability initiative as an activity that we will engage in this afternoon with other members of the Assembly.

I cannot help mentioning resolution 2261 (2016) on Colombia as an extraordinary success during your presidency, Mr. President. It is probably only we Latin Americans who can truly appreciate the significance of this step. For over 50 years, Colombia was plunged in a bloody war whose various origins were very closely linked to the social and political situation of all Latin American countries, in particular a violent period of years of political unrest following the assassination of the leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala. The fact that both the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo have asked for Security Council support to monitor and verify the implementation of new peace agreements is not just a recognition of the work of the United Nations. Indeed, through that action, the Security Council is taking on great responsibility to ensure that this culture of violence ceases, that weapons should be laid down and that other mechanisms of war that exist in Colombia should be dismantled, such as paramilitarism, the Plan Colombia and other phenomena that are closely linked to the conflict in that sister nation.

For us, Venezuela, as everyone knows, our liberator, Simón Bolívar, was also Colombia's liberator, as he was the liberator of five other Latin American nations. For us, our army crossed borders only to liberate our Latin American brothers — never to attack any country. As the late President Chávez Frías once said, one of our strongest desires is to see peace — peace and social justice — for our Colombian brothers. We think that the adoption of this resolution was one of the most important achievements in January. We wish to reiterate our thanks to the United Kingdom, which, in a very short amount of time, was able to facilitate a resolution that is to a great extent in line with the agreements that the parties reached during their last meeting in Havana.

Unfortunately, while we have this encouraging news from Colombia, I must confess that we are not comfortable with the way the Security Council is addressing some issues and not others. The Security Council has a very clear mandate pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations. However, there are certain problems that, due to national interests, particularly those of the Council's permanent members, become priorities to such an extent that a single topic is tackled four or five times in a month, when the reality is that there is a conflict throughout entire regions such as the Middle East that requires a shared, joint vision to resolve it.

In this regard, I would highlight the question of Palestine. The issue of Palestine is very frustrating for us and a sign of the failure of the Security Council thus far to work in a coordinated manner. There is no consensus on the subject, and we have been unable to adopt a single resolution in the last seven years. New Zealand proposed a draft resolution. France is trying, and we are expecting a draft resolution. I think the Security Council should truly make it a goal this year to propose a solution for the Palestinian people, because what is happening in Palestine is utterly in violation of international law.

This has nothing to do with Israel, nor it is against the Israelis; we deeply regret the civilian deaths on both sides. This is more a question of international law and the need for the settlement activities in Palestine to end. There is a need for Security Council resolutions to be properly implemented. A response needs to be given to the legitimate concerns of the Palestinian people, with a solution based on the existence of two States. Nor have we been able to promote Palestine becoming accepted as a full-fledged State Member of the United Nations, which is a prerogative of the Security Council and is one of the prerequisites for moving forward in negotiations, in the sense that it should be a given that two States exist. Otherwise, Palestine will continue to be subjected to disproportionate military action by Israel and to an unending settlement process.

While we are gathered here, I would also mention the Palestinian youth and the Palestinian people who are being blockaded in Gaza. These people had expectations and trust in the international community that we have unfortunately failed to live up to.

Also with regard to the Middle East, we need to recognize the situations in Iraq, in Syria and in Libya,

which are all linked. They have the same origin, and at some point we need to carry out an assessment of the Security Council interventions in those conflicts and what the results have been. Today, there are vast territories where State institutions do not exist, where there is no official institution of any kind nor any social fabric that could provide a response for these peoples in the face of the trauma of conflict. In Iraq, in Libya and in Syria, most of the State institutions have collapsed, and in the ensuing vacuum a new phenomenon has arisen — new in terms of its size.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon. Many countries around this table have suffered from terrorist acts. We have always condemned terrorism on principle, but the terrorism we are seeing today is highly funded with great military might. It is almost an army, and it represents the development of a new kind of war — one that uses social networks and appears capable of countering all coalitions formed to fight it. We believe that the Security Council needs to rethink its action in the face of this new phenomenon in the Middle East and make it a priority so as to address these issues one by one, without leaving any one out.

We have discussed the issue of Syria. What has happened in Syria is a tragedy. We reject the use of starvation and siege against the population itself as a weapon of war. We repudiate the attacks on humanitarian agencies and on civilians. We condemn what happened in Madaya.

But also we raise our voice in outcry against what is happening in Yemen. As I said, there are issues that are just not discussed. The situation in Yemen also needs to be tackled because the same factors underpinning the Syrian crisis are at play in the conflict in Yemen as well. Clearly there needs to be a regional vision for the solution to these conflicts.

With regard to Syria, the enormous effort undertaken by the International Syria Support Group to promote the negotiations in Geneva is an extraordinary opportunity that I hope the Council will not squander. I think Mr. De Mistura deserves the full support of the Security Council. We are troubled that, at this stage, parts of the opposition still have not agreed on who will represent them and have put preconditions on initiating the dialogue. We call on Council members that may have influence on those parties to uphold the agreement and remind them that it was agreed that they were going to begin discussions without preconditions. We have said that humanitarian issues would be prioritized once the peace talks began.

Finally, I must mention the situation in Burundi. We have said on many occasions that we are particularly troubled that 60 or 70 per cent of the conflicts on the agenda of the sanctions committees take place in Africa. That indicates that our brotherly African continent continues to suffer the legacy of its colonialist past and all the divisions within its countries. It is in constant conflict. We appreciate the visit that the Council conducted to Burundi and affirm that any action taken by the Security Council, not withstanding its differences with the authorities of the country concerned, must must be in line with Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

I also thank the countries that have indicated their active support for us as we assume the next presidency. We hope that we will live up to the example of our Latin American predecessor and hope to contribute to international peace and security from that position on the Security Council.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I thank you, Mr. President, and your team for a successful presidency. You, Sir, have guided the Council through an eventful month. Uruguay and the other new members of the Council have really hit the ground running. I very much agree with Mr. Motohide Yoshikawa on brevity.

We appreciate that you, Sir, have chosen to hold a wrap-up briefing at the end of your month. I note that the three most recent presidencies all held informal wrap-ups outside the Chamber with all General Assembly members. Those have the same benefit as these formal meetings in terms of transparency, but they have the added benefit of allowing interactivity and allowing all General Assembly colleagues to ask us questions. Whether we do them formally or informally, I hope that we can use these sessions to draw lessons on our working methods. Here are three specific suggestions drawn from experience this month. They are not criticisms of the presidency; quite the opposite, they are encouragement to go further still in modernizing the working methods of the Security Council.

First of all, we saw in Burundi how Council visits can have a real impact on the challenges we face. We sent a strong message when we returned to Burundi just 10 months after our last visit and we made clear during the visit that we expect progress on what I

call the three "Ds": de-escalation, dialogue and some form of deployment of an international presence. However, there is a fourth "D": delay. There was a delay in agreeing the visit to Burundi and I think that delay was not good enough. The situation degenerated and our delay weakened our message at a time when sustained pressure was needed. So, I wonder whether we should move away from consensus in agreeing such visits. If some Council members do not want to come on a visit, let us not allow them to undermine the entire Council. Going further, perhaps there would be value in setting aside a week every four months or so where all Council members would be encouraged to visit an area on our agenda, whether as a whole or in a group or even individually. This so-called visiting week could allow us all to do some real diplomacy and outreach and engagement and even prevention or resolution of conflicts.

Secondly, we are at our best when we respond to events quickly and efficiently. Our work on Colombia this month was a good example of how we can work quickly and flexibly to get an important issue onto our agenda, and I am hopeful that our actions will herald a new era for everyone in Colombia. Even our meeting on Madaya in Syria had a bright side in terms of putting a spotlight on an immediate issue that could put pressure on those responsible. It was well timed, given the London conference next week, and I hope the profile that we have given will encourage every participant in London to pledge generously to help both the immediate and the long-term needs of the people in Syria and the region. That means more support for education, job creation and ultimately more hope for the future.

Not all of our meetings have such a clear purpose. Regular debates, regular briefings and regular consultations fill up our programme of work and often lead just to the repetition of well-known positions, rather than to genuine engagement or progress. The Council adds most value when responding to events as close to real time as possible, rather than according to an arbitrarily fixed reporting cycle. So, rather than clogging up the programme of work, let us try to leave enough time to be agile in the face of ongoing issues. The crises of the world do not operate on a quarterly basis, so our response to them should not either.

Thirdly, and finally, one of the most important responsibilities for the Security Council in 2016 is to recommend to the General Assembly who the next Secretary-General should be. Outside the Security Council, a lot of people are doing good work to help us answer that question. Inside the Council, we have some catching up to do on what we want from the next Secretary-General, what challenges he or she will face and how we can work together to overcome them. To address those questions and more the United Kingdom will call for discussion under the "Any other business" rubric on that issue next month. To ensure that we get the best candidate for the job, it is vital that we mirror the activism being shown on that issue outside the Council.

In conclusion, I commend Mr. Elbio Rosselli for January and wish Mr. Rafael Darío Ramírez Carreño good luck for February. Let us all focus on improving still further our work in terms of our transparency, interactivity, efficiency and impact.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by warmly thanking the Ambassador of Uruguay and his team for all the excellent work they carried out this month. It is no easy task to join the Council and immediately assume such a heavy presidency. You, Mr. President, did so brilliantly and with great competency and professionalism. On behalf of France, I thank and warmly congratulate you, Sir.

There is a great deal to be said at the beginning of this year. I will not go back to the Council's important and difficult mission to Burundi, on which I briefed the Council earlier today. However, I will say that it should encourage us to review our methodology in terms of preparing for such missions, and we must quickly draw political lessons from those visits, in light of the decisions, as I said, taken by the African Union at its Summit.

Today I would like above all to assess the positive trends and signs of hope that are emerging on various important issues with the hope that we will see more hopeful developments in the future. In the Central African Republic, we welcome the commitment of the Transitional Authorities and the Central African people to organizing and participating in the elections of 30 December, which took place peacefully. The constructive engagement of Central African political actors is commendable and should be continued. We also welcome the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga,

who worked to provide political, security and logistical support for the elections.

On 28 January, the Constitutional Court announced the final results of the first round of presidential elections. Technical difficulties led to invalidization of the first round of legislative elections. The objective should still be to complete the transition in accordance with the agreed timetable on 31 March. New electionsand the second round of the presidential election will be held on 14 February. At the end of this election cycle, the Central African Republic will have a freely and democratically elected Government and will be able to continue its reconciliation and stabilization efforts with the support of the international community. Let us remain committed to supporting that momentum.

There has also been good news from Côte d'Ivoire, where the presidential election held in October last year demonstrated the progress made by the country in all areas. Côte d'Ivoire demonstrates the extent to which a peacekeeping mission can assist a country in addressing and emerging from a crisis. The Council drew on the lessons learned by deciding the immediate drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Ultimately, the termination of UNOCI will be the best symbol of its success. The strategic review that the Secretariat will conduct over the next two months will enable modalities to be defined. A prompt, effective and well-organized withdrawal of UNOCI will be the best way to build on gains made, demonstrate our confidence in the country and its people, and ensure a strong legacy for Côte d'Ivoire and for international peace and security.

The promising new momentum in intercommunal talks in Cyprus, which the Council acknowledged in the unanimous adoption of resolution 2263 (2016) yesterday, gives us hope. We must continue to relentlessly support the efforts and resolve of the two leaders to reunify the island, in accordance with parameters outlined by the United Nations and in line with the European Union acquis.

Last Monday, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2261 (2016), establishing a United Nations mission to observe and monitor the ceasefire expected in Colombia in the coming months as part of the peace process. As previously mentioned, the adoption of the resolution constitutes a success for the parties as the newly established mission will be a factor in concluding the talks currently under way for a ceasefire. It is also a success for the United Nations and for the Council, which responded promptly to the appeal made by Colombia in an unusual context in which a country turns of its own volition to the Council to request its assistance in implementing a negotiated settlement. We must now meet expectations and ensure that the planning of the mission takes place in a timely manner. France will continue to work resolutely to that end.

January was also a memorable month for non-proliferation, which is a harbinger both of hope and of threats. As to hope, on 16 January the Security Council received a report from the International Atomic Energy Agency confirming that Iran was implementing the initial provisions of the Vienna agreement, thereby triggering Implementation Day. The strict and good-faith implementation of the Vienna agreement will be the only way to guarantee the credibility of the agreement and to ensure that the resolution of the Iranian nuclear issue is sustainable. We will continue to monitor the situation.

With regard to threats, on 6 January that North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test in a gross violation of Security Council resolutions. Such an act poses a serious threat to regional and international peace and security. We agreed to respond by holding emergency consultations on that same day. We hope to swiftly adopt a strong resolution under Chapter VII that will substantially strengthen sanctions. Three weeks after the nuclear test and facing the threat of a ballistic missile test, it is now time for us to take action.

In Syria, there is a prevailing sense of both hope and bitterness. Hope was kindled by the adoption of resolution 2254 (2015) and the prospects for the start of political negotiations, and bitterness by the conditions in which the negotiations are taking placing because there has been no improvement in the humanitarian situation. In early January, humanitarian workers described unbearable conditions in Madaya and other besieged cities in Syria. The Council could not remain indifferent to such testimony. That is why France immediately reacted by calling a public meeting of the Security Council to warn about the plight of civilians in besieged towns in Syria (see S/PV.7610). We recall and stress that humanitarian access to civilian populations is not a favour or concession to be made by the Syrian regime and other players involved; it is an absolute requirement. A credible political process requires an immediate improvement in the situation on the ground for Syrians.

At the public debate on the Middle East held on 26 January (see S/PV.7612), we stressed the importance of a swift start to inter-Syrian negotiations, reiterated the need for rapid and considerable improvement in the humanitarian situation, and called for the discussions to focus on the political transition, in accordance with the terms of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). We hope that the Vienna process will meet those objectives. A political solution alone will put a lasting end to the suffering of civilians and reduce the terrorist threat that we all face.

I conclude by warmly thanking the Uruguayan presidency and wishing Venezuela every success as it assumes the presidency. My last word will be for our dear Movses Abelian, who has been appointed to a new post by the Secretary-General. Movses has embodied the institutional memory of the Council for many years, and has given us his precise, professional and wise counsel seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The French delegation warmly thanks him and wishes him every success in his new and important mission with the General Assembly.

Mr. Lucas (Angola) (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate you, Mr. President, and the delegation of Uruguay on your guidance of the work of the Council this month.

(*spoke in English*)

In our view, more than these formal wrap-up sessions by Security Council members — in which we repeat much of what was said in consultations, briefings, debates and open debates — we consider that the interactive dialogues that the President and Council members hold with the wider membership of the United Nations are a more useful tool for the Council's work.

We shall highlight and briefly touch upon the African issues considered this month — namely, the Security Council missions to Burundi, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, the West African region, the Sudan and Somalia — and on two important moments of the Uruguayan presidency: the debate on the protection of civilians (see S/PV.7606) and the one on the Middle East (see S/PV.7610).

Less than a year ago, the Security Council conducted a mission to Burundi, which was viewed then as a success story for a country that had emerged from armed conflict and was on its way to consolidating peace, national reconciliation and economic and social reconstruction. This month, however, the reasons for visiting the country were quite different. Burundi has been plunged into escalating violence, and our expectation is that this mission by the Security Council will make some meaningful contribution to easing tensions in Burundi and facilitating a return to inclusive negotiations in the pursuit of a national consensus towards a better and peaceful future for the country. We thank the French Ambassador for the thorough information he provided to the Council on the Security Council mission (see S/PV.7615).

In Mali, with regard to the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement signed in May 2015, the commitment of the parties to the Peace Agreement and the progress made so far in its implementation — despite weaknesses, difficulties and serious threats such as the presence of terrorists and international criminal network — Mali deserves credit for the fact that the attainment of durable peace in the country is possible.

The peaceful manner in which just and fair elections took place in Côte d'Ivoire and the virtuous cycle in which the country is apparently engaged are further instances of the substantial changes taking place. In spite of that, concerns remain on the importance of implementing, with renewed determination, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the reform of the security sector and State institutions, and the deepening of national reconciliation, against the backdrop of the steady drawdown of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire.

The work, mediation and good offices of the United Nations Office for West Africa have played an important role in stabilizing the region. However, acts of terrorism, drug trafficking and transnational organized crime are serious threats to West Africa's security, while terrorists are a destabilizing force in the north of Mali and the Sahel region as a whole. Boko Haram continues to spread terror, death and destruction in the Lake Chad Basin region, requiring the combined efforts of the international community to combat and defeat them.

The situation in Libya has reached an impasse. The constitution of the Government of national consensus, as foreseen in the Peace Agreement, has not yet become a reality, delaying much-needed concerted efforts to combat the growing terrorist threat, mainly from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

As usual, discussions related to the Sudan revealed significant differences among members of the Council, making it difficult to reach an agreement on a press statement that, still pending, will take stock of the latest Security Council meeting. The situation on the ground remains a matter of great concern, especially with respect to the ongoing rejection by the rebel groups of dialogue on the basis of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur and the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, and to the humanitarian and human rights situations.

With regard to Somalia, during the meeting held yesterday (S/PV.7614), it was stressed that it is important for all Somali actors to focus on national priorities: the organization of elections in 2016, the fight against the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, and the strengthening of Somali security forces. There are challenges that will require the continuous and strong engagement of the international community and commitment of the Security Council.

In the debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/PV.7606), the wider membership of the United Nations expressed its views on that critical issue. The conclusion drawn from the debate was that, despite the establishment by the international community, and the Security Council in particular, of a robust normative framework on the protection of civilians, embodied in several resolutions and presidential statements, and the strengthening of the protection of civilians and human rights mandates in peacekeeping missions, no improvement has been seen on the ground. More civilians continue to be abused, and human rights are violated before the very eyes of peacekeeping missions.

In the open debate on the Middle East (S/PV.7610), there was general agreement that the most pressing issue in the region is to defeat radical extremist groups in order to facilitate a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It is also absolutely necessary that we avoid a scenario in which ISIL consolidates an extremist rogue State in parts of Syria and Iraq as a breeding ground for terrorists. Political, diplomatic, military and economic cooperation must be intensified to start providing, in a short period of time, the tangible rewards of peace and stability to the peoples of the regions, who are increasingly desperate and disillusioned by the policy of double standards and inaction in the face of such catastrophic political, economic and humanitarian conditions.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I would like to thank you, Sir, and the entire Uruguayan team for your hard work during the very busy month of January. You have organized and led the Security Council's work in an exemplary fashion, and the Ukrainian delegation applauds your outstanding performance. It was no small feat, given the number of contingencies that have arisen this January. Having said that, I would like to share with you some of my delegation's ideas about the work done by the Council so far.

The subject of the Syrian crisis has been consistently at the centre of the Council's attention. The deplorable humanitarian situation in the country, the fate of the people in besieged towns and cities, the situation around the Syrian chemical weapons programme, the political process to find a way to put an end to the bloody conflict that has been ravaging the country for years — all of this we tried to address. With a heavy heart, I have to say that the Security Council has not performed very well in that area despite all of our efforts. The Syrian people continue to suffer and bear the brunt of the armed conflict waged on their land. Particularly worrying is the use by the parties to the conflict of starvation as a method of warfare. This is absolutely unacceptable, and I say this as a representative of the country that suffered the artificial famine organized by the former Soviet regime during 1932-1933.

It has been said many times in this Chamber that something has to be done about the Syrian crisis. Unfortunately, the words do not always translate into action. I appeal to colleagues around the table that we try to break the vicious cycle of self-perpetuating violence in Syria. One thing is needed: political will — genuine and sincere political will. Without it, no matter how much or how long we continue our debates in the Chamber or in the consultation room, the situation on the ground will not change and innocent people will continue to lose their lives.

Other than the Syrian crisis, we addressed many other subjects. I deliberately choose not to go through all of them, as other colleagues before me have already done so. However, the North Korean nuclear test on 6 January demands the particularly close attention of the Council. This blatant act undermines the very foundations of the global non-proliferation regime, and it cannot be tolerated. A firm response from the Security Council is required. We like to talk about non-proliferation; here we have a clear case of proliferation, yet the Council is very slow to react properly.

The visit of the Security Council to Burundi was a very useful exercise, although quite disappointing. The opportunity to talk to different interlocutors on the ground and see the country first hand was of immense importance for us as Security Council members entrusted with the authority to maintain international peace and stability. The situation in the country will remain a source of concern for the Security Council for quite some time, and we have to remain vigilant so as not to allow the situation to escalate further.

On a different and positive note, I would like to point out the adoption of resolution 2261 (2016) on the establishment of a political mission in Colombia to monitor and verify the implementation of the agreement between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo. It was a historic moment for Colombia, and the Ukrainian delegation is proud to have been there to support the efforts to end the longest-lasting civil war in Latin America.

I wish to say a few words on the working methods of the Council. First of all, I strongly support the points made by the delegation of the United Kingdom on Security Council visits and on the process of the selection of the next Secretary-General.

As a member returning to the Council after 15 years, I cannot help but be astonished at the volume of work that the Council does. There are many more items on the agenda, and these items are discussed at much greater length during our meetings. I am afraid, however, that this is a case where more does not mean better. Sometimes we are barely able to consider just one item in one morning or afternoon meeting. I remember that during Ukraine's previous term on the Council 15 years ago, we would cover three or more subjects at once. It is my strong conviction that this area of the Council's work requires significant improvement. I was able to find the following quote after listening to the Japanese Ambassador. "Sometimes not speaking says more than all the words in the world."

I would like to conclude by wishing Venezuela a successful presidency in the coming month of February. Venezuela can fully count on our support.

Mr. Xu Zhongsheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks you, Mr. President, for convening today's meeting, and expresses its appreciation to the Uruguayan presidency for leading the work of the Security Council to a smooth conclusion in January. With regard to the work of the Council this month, I wish to focus on three points.

The first is the situation in the Middle East. Currently, peace talks between Palestine and Israel have come to a stalemate. The conflict is intensifying, and the security situation is worsening. It is the shared responsibility of the international community to safeguard the legitimate national rights of the Palestine people. The international community should continue to urge for an immediate ceasefire and end to the violence so as to ease the situation. Meanwhile, more vigorous action should be taken to kick-start peace talks and promote an early resumption of negotiations. The international community should create a new mechanism for the restoration of peace, and support the efforts of the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Security Council should respond positively to the legitimate demands of the Palestinians and other Arab States and consider seriously such questions as the provision of international support to the Palestinian people.

Secondly, China appreciates Special Envoy De Mistura's mediation efforts in Syria and supports the role of the United Nations as the main channel for mediation in the quest for a political solution there. At the moment, there is a significant window of opportunity for achieving such a solution. The international community should continue to support United Nations efforts and work together to maintain the current positive momentum for a political solution, encouraging all Syrian parties to proceed from the overall interests of the nation and its people, and to demonstrate good faith, identify their common interests and resolve their differences so as to enable the current round of talks in Geneva to yield positive results.

Thirdly, positive progress has recently been made on the political process in Somalia. Efforts to build a federal system are making steady progress. China welcomed the convening of a national consultative forum for all Somalis and the consensus that has been reached on the modalities for the elections to be held in 2016. We hope that all the Somali parties will continue to be united in promoting national reconciliation and advancing a political process that is Somali-led and Somali-owned. The international community should continue to provide Somalia with humanitarian assistance and help to ease the humanitarian situation. In accordance with Somalia's needs, we should increase our contributions in the economic and security fields and help Somalia

strengthen its national capacity-building and embark on the road to national development and prosperity as soon as possible.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish Venezuela, the incoming President of the Council for the month of February, success in its work. We also thank Mr. Movses Abelian for his important contributions to the work of the Security Council in the past five years, and wish him success in his new job.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank you personally, Mr. President, and the whole Uruguayan delegation for your skilful and effective presidency of the Council for January.

This month saw a full agenda. We had a thorough consideration of a number of African topics: Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and the situations in Darfur and West Africa. We sent a Security Council mission to Burundi and the headquarters of the African Union, a positive result of which was the President of Burundi's affirmation of his willingness and openness to accept international support for his country's efforts to find a solution to the crisis there. We should take advantage of the opportunity. That solid list shows that the majority of the Council's work has been focused on African problems.

I would particularly like to note the Security Council's adoption on 25 January of resolution 2261 (2016), establishing a United Nations mission in Colombia. We believe that the progress the parties have made in settling their 50-year conflict and the decision to invite the further facilitation of the United Nations constitute an important, perhaps even historic event not only for Colombians but for the region as a whole. Moscow is keeping a keen eye on the course of the negotiations and will maintain its steadfast support to reaching a speedy conclusion to the peace process.

Over the past month, the Council has considered the humanitarian aspects of the internal armed conflict in Syria three times. There can be no doubt that we must not relax our attention to the situation there, given the extremely grave consequences that the conflict, the terrorist atrocities and the attempts of certain external actors to forcibly redraw the centuries-old ethno-religious map of Syria have had for the civilian population. However, we believe that this is not a case where the quantity of meetings reflects their quality. To start with, once the plight of the residents of the besieged cities became the subject of the Council's intense attention, it was treated in a very one-sided and biased way. Secondly, behind this activity there clearly lurks a wish to distract attention from fundamental issues of settlement and perhaps even to sabotage the start of talks in Geneva. We must realize that without the comprehensive political solution that we are all hoping for, the humanitarian situation will not improve.

Unfortunately, we are compelled to conclude that from time to time some delegations exploit their status as members of the Council to politicize and put a propagandistic spin on their own particular priorities, rather than working quietly and painstakingly on the maintenance of international peace and security within the Council's authority under the Charter of the United Nations. That applies in particular to the Arria Formula meeting held a few days ago on the global challenge of accounting for missing persons from conflict, human rights abuses, disasters, organized crime, migration and other involuntary causes. There is no justification for the artificial tying of this topic to the work of the Security Council. There was no prior consultation of Council members on the need for such a meeting, and most were simply presented with a fait accompli. We believe that this undermines the collective principles of the work of the Security Council.

Incidentally, that collective approach helps to improve the effectiveness of the Council's activities, including such important tools as mission visits. In any case, there is nothing to prevent individual Council members from visiting countries they are interested in in their national capacity. We would like to point out that Arria Formula meetings are supposed to be informal confidential occasions for a frank exchange of views in private on the issues that fall under the Security Council's remit. Unfortunately, we are increasingly seeing individual Council members abusing the format by making use of it to push their own initiatives or those of their proxy organizations. Such events should be held on the margins, not paid for under the Organization's budget.

In conclusion, I would like to express our thanks to the outgoing Director of the Security Council Affairs Division, Mr. Movses Abelian, for his assistance and his facilitation of the Council's work, and to congratulate him on his promotion. I would also like to wish the incoming Venezuelan presidency of the Council every success in carrying out its functions.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I will now make a statement in my national capacity and will try to limit it to five minutes, as was recommended by the representative of Japan.

During the month of January, the Security Council has held 17 meetings, 12 consultations, 2 open debates, 1 closed meeting and 1 mission to Burundi and Addis Ababa. We have adopted 4 resolutions and 12 press statements. If we based our productivity on numbers of resolutions and meetings, I am not completely sure what percentage that would constitute. My colleagues have prepared some notes for me concerning which they will probably only be annoyed with me, as usual, because I usually ignore them and do not keep closely to them. But I do not want to repeat everything that has already been said in this Chamber, and I would therefore like to touch on a few specific points that include some positive aspects.

First, there was some good news from Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, and we saw meaningful progress made. The mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus was renewed, and while that in itself is not really important, what is important is the progress that has been made by the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders in advancing a process that we can only hope will be crowned with success.

As a Latin American, the adoption of resolution 2261 (2016) on Colombia, which other colleagues have touched on, is a source of great satisfaction to me, first because I am sure that it will help to move forward the negotiating process for peace, and secondly the Security Council was able to act unanimously by adopting the resolution because under our presidency.

We also believe that the two open debates held on the protection of civilians (see S/PV.7606) and on the Middle East (see S/PV.7610) were positive developments because they once again drew the attention of the Council and its members to those urgent issues. Moreover, the issue of protecting civilians is deeply rooted in other problems with which the Security Council is seized, such as the terrible humanitarian situation unfolding in the Middle East.

With regard to some points of concern, it has been rightly pointed out that we are all concerned over the North Korean nuclear test. This is a very serious problem. We can only hope that the Security Council will adopt a resolution on that issue in a few days.

As Latin Americans, we are very seriously concerned by another suspension of elections in Haiti. That is a real cause for concern because the political establishment in Haiti is displaying an apparent lack of responsibility for complying with the time lines and its obligations to its own society to establish a Government and to carry out the reforms and processes that the people of Haiti have been yearning for. Haiti is one of those places where the Security Council has a clear presence through its peacekeeping operation. To that end, I wonder whether now would be the right time to consider conducting a visit to Haiti in the very near future because we must do our utmost to get the political process back on track in Haiti.

From the humanitarian perspective, the situations in Syria, the Sudan and Yemen, where sieges and hunger are being used as weapons of war and hospitals and school facilities are being attacked, are of grave concern to us. As a new member of the Security Council, we are experiencing a certain degree of frustration because, on the one hand, we see the Council fail to ensure that one member meet its obligations and, on the other hand, that non-State actors are ignoring its pleas. As a new member of the Security Council, I must say that we experience some degree of frustration which I hope will wane with time.

With regard to methods, I should like to share a single consideration. As a new member, I am struck by the fact that the Council has its own momentum and rhythm in dealing with different issues. We often talk about collective wisdom, but I am struck by the fact that we have plenary meetings here — "open meetings", as they are known — where we hear briefings, discuss them and head to the consultation room next door. And that is where we actually read out documents setting forth national positions. Almost no debate takes place. I cannot judge too clearly as I have only been here for 30 days, but we always hear the national positions in the consultation room. We could hear the national positions in the Chamber. Everyone who attends these meetings could hear the statements, and real consultations could take place in the consultation room on how problems can be resolved and what we can accept as a body. This may be a case of my speaking out of turn, but I was keen to share these thoughts with Council members.

I thank all the delegations for their words of congratulations, but those congratulations go to the hard-working team that supports me. Any merit in

our leadership goes to the team, and I accept all the responsibility for any faults.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I formally thank all delegations for their cooperation, and the Secretariat, the interpreters and translators for all their unfailing support. I wish Mr. Abelian the best going forward and thank him directly for his constant support to us.

On behalf of the Council, we wish our brothers and colleagues from Venezuela every success in their presidency which they will take up in February.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.